

## Philosophical inquiries inspire Kerem Ozan Bayraktar's new show



Painter with 7 horses, 2013, computer generated image on c-print, 80 x 100 cm. (Photo: Today's Zaman)

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Kerem ozan bayraktar is an Istanbul-based artist who has a unique place in contemporary art in Turkey since he is one of the few artists who create works based on philosophical studies.

Currently showcasing his newest solo show titled "circus" at Istanbul's PG Art Gallery in tophane neighborhood, he is criticizing the historicity attributed to photographs by creating them via 3D-rendering software and is also emphasizing the relationality of the elements of an artwork rather than the meanings of it.

As a graduate of Marmara University painting department, Bayraktar is continuing his doctoral studies on art at the same university and his thesis is on systems theory and art. Bayraktar argues that the elements of the language that an artist creates are more important than what he or she shows. "Today, generally an artwork constitutes a cosmos of meaning; however, I believe that the structure of constituting the meaning, I mean the relationships themselves are more significant," says Bayraktar in an interview with Today's Zaman.

Bayraktar explains that using figurative language, he wants the audience to read the relationality. "For instance, when the audience says, I'm seeing a circle here, that's what I intend to do anyways," he says, pointing out his works such as "Painter with Horses" or "P-40 airplanes" at his current show. "In this exhibition, my main point is to create a playground and to show the fictionality itself. In almost all of my works here, there is a set and the things in this system behave in certain ways. Sometimes the set is an object like a fence, and sometimes the figures themselves constitute the set," Bayraktar notes.

The issue of representation is also a very significant point for the artist. "I continue to question the relationship of the photograph and document. Due to historical habits, the photographic image is presented as if it is historic. I created many works to distort that perception. We attribute historicity to them and accept them as documents, but all my photographs are created by computer. They have the same effect, but they are not documents," he emphasizes, adding that according to him images are the constituents of the history.

"Even the structure of this artwork," the artist says, pointing out the portraits of the antelopes and their names in Latin, "is created in order to tease the classical family archives." Another two of Bayraktar's photos featuring airplane images make this point even clearer. "In the first one, we see airplanes flying, but in the second one, since they are flying in a circle we cannot see this photograph as a document. This is not because of the photographic quality, but it is because how the image behaves," he elaborates.

In a parallel vein, through his works titled "Horse and Duck" and "Horse and Duck 2," he continues to delve into the basic identity problem in philosophy. "It is impossible for two different horses to give the exact same pose like this. Here I'm again underlining the possibilities we can do via computers. The classical idea that a photograph reflects something original comes from the fact that a thing can be in a position only once in history and a photograph captures that moment. Here, on the other hand, there is a horse in a photograph and we see the horse in the same position with different qualitative qualities such as a different color or pattern," Bayraktar points out.

In terms of aesthetics, the artist explains that he is very much influenced by computer simulation games such as SimCity or Farmville. "These games are all based on modularity. You create a lot of systems with one unit. It's creating thousands of the same thing. How can this be used in art, I tried to think. It's like the sculptures in the minimalist era. Carl Andre's brick works, for instance," he says, adding that in terms of colors he aimed to have an Instagram affect.

Another common thing in his series is the rotation movement he uses, especially in his video works. "This is also related to my previous painting education. My videos with rotating objects are kind of pending in time. They don't have a beginning, evolvment and ending. Like a painting. It might have a nihilist implication, but it is there only if you look from a Western standpoint. If you embrace an Eastern perspective, it's even meditative. The idea of creating that effect with a very industrial object, with the trucks for instance, and depicting them as if they are toys were in the background of this work," he explains about his video titled "An opening ceremony for a public statue."

Technically, he uses 3D rendering, which architects generally use, in his projects. "I prefer this in order to emphasize the fictionality of the situation and the fantasy aspect of it. I'm very much influenced by something Zizek says -- in order to get rid of the desire, you need to highlight it as much as you can. At one moment they become so absurd that you cannot understand anything from the ducks next to a horse." Bayraktar notes, adding that he uses this absurdity in a conscious way. "It's like dance or theater. There are some movements in a circus or dance show. We watch a quite fictional show with absurd things happening: if you think about it, it's quite stupid. But we watch it without questioning because we enjoy certain relationships such as horses rotating around the clown," he elaborates, adding that he adopts a similar approach.

"Circus" is on display until Nov. 2 at PG Art Gallery. For more information on the artist, visit www.pgartgallery.com, www.keremozan.com and www.apofani.org.

Keywords: kerem ozan bayraktar , show , Turkey , circus , tophane

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